

## Lutheran Confessions

### The Formula of Concord, Epitome

#### III. OF THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF FAITH BEFORE GOD.

1. Against both the errors just recounted, we unanimously believe, teach, and confess that Christ is our Righteousness neither according to the divine nature alone nor according to the human nature alone, but that it is the entire Christ according to both natures, **in His obedience alone**, which as God and man He rendered to the Father even unto death, and thereby merited for us the forgiveness of sins and eternal life, as it is written: *As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of One shall many be made righteous*, Rom. 5, 19.

2. Accordingly, we believe, teach, and confess that our righteousness before God is [this very thing], that God forgives us our sins out of pure grace, without any work, merit, or worthiness of ours preceding, present, or following, that He presents and imputes to us **the righteousness of Christ's obedience**, on account of which righteousness we are received into grace by God, and regarded as righteous.

3. We believe, teach, and confess that faith alone is the means and instrument whereby we lay hold of Christ, and thus in Christ of that righteousness which avails before God, for whose sake this faith is imputed to us for righteousness, Rom. 4, 5.

4. We believe, teach, and confess that this faith is not a bare knowledge of the history of Christ, but such a gift of God by which we come to the right knowledge of Christ as our Redeemer in the Word of the Gospel, and trust in Him that **for the sake of His obedience alone** we have, by grace, the forgiveness of sins, are regarded as holy and righteous before God the Father, and eternally saved.

5. We believe, teach, and confess that according to the usage of Holy Scripture the word justify means in this article, to absolve, that is, to declare free from sins. Prov. 17, 15: *He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the righteous, even they both are abomination to the Lord*. Also Rom. 8, 33: *Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth*.

(Bente, F., *Concordia Triglotta*, Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Northwestern Publishing House, 1997).

## Put it into Practice

*These questions have been put together to help you as you extend and apply tonight's Scripture to your life.*

### Prayer

Lord of all power and might, the Author and Giver of all good things, graft into our hearts the love of Your name, increase in us true religion, nourish us with all goodness, and of Your great mercy keep us in the same; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. AMEN  
*(Collect for Trinity 6)*

### Word of God: St. Matthew 5:17-26 (on back)

### Questions to Ponder in Prayer

- Note: Here the term "Law and the Prophets"(v.17), and "Law"(v.18), and later "commandments"(v.19) refer to the Holy Scriptures (not works God directs man to do: Law as opposed to Gospel).
- Why did Jesus come to us (that is take on human flesh)?
  - To abolish the Scriptures(Law and Gospel)?
  - To fulfill the Scriptures(Law and Gospel)?
- How important are these commandments(Law and Gospel)?
  - Should a believer set aside the "least of these commandments," and teach others to do the same, what is the declaration?
  - Should a believer practice and teach God's Word, what is the declaration?
- When we speak of OUR self-made righteousness, how good do we have to be? (See James 2:10, Ecclesiastes 7:20, Matthew 22:37-39)
- When Jesus preaches the law, does He make it doable?
  - 5<sup>th</sup> Commandment(v. 21-23)
  - Summary of commandments 4 through 10(v. 24-24) Matthew 22:39,
- How then are we saved? Answer: Jesus fulfilled the Holy Scriptures.
  - Jesus perfectly kept the Law in our place (Active obedience). See Romans 5:19.
  - Jesus died to take our punishment(Passive obedience). See 1 Cor 15:3
  - Jesus fulfilled all the Gospel promises of a Savior. See 2 Cor 1:20.
- How are our matters settled before God?
  - Our adversary was God! He settled things by His Son. See Romans 5:6-10
  - We believe that God's settlement is true. See Romans 10:4

### 6:30 PM "Learn by Heart"

*Through simple repetition those present will inwardly digest...*

Hymn #425, stanza 1  
3<sup>rd</sup> Commandment & meaning, p. 300  
St. Matthew 5:19

### 7:00 PM "Catechesis"

+ Opening Verses  
"O Lord, open my lips..." p.224

+ Ascription of Praise  
"Praise to you, O Christ. Alleluia." p.225

### Reading

St. Matthew 5:17-26 (back)

### Hymn

"The Will of God Is Always Best" #425

### Catechesis on...

St. Matthew 5:17-26 (back)  
Liturgy  
Catechism

--prayer based on reading

+ Recite Word by Word insert

Ten Commandments  
Lord's Prayer  
Apostles' Creed  
Sacrament of Holy Baptism  
Matthew 28:19  
Mark 16:16  
Confession & Absolution  
John 20:22-23  
Sacrament of the Altar  
Words of Institution

Collect of the Day

--prayer based on reading

R. AMEN

Benediction

R. AMEN

## Catechesis on St. Matthew 5:17-26

<sup>17</sup>“Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. <sup>18</sup>“For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. <sup>19</sup>“Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches *them*, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. <sup>20</sup>“For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds *the righteousness* of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>21</sup>“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.’ <sup>22</sup>“But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, ‘Raca!’ shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, ‘You fool!’ shall be in danger of hell fire.

<sup>23</sup>“Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, <sup>24</sup>“leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

<sup>25</sup>“Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. <sup>26</sup>“Assuredly, I say to you, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny. (NKJV)

### Scribal and Pharisaical Righteousness

“Let us, therefore, in all our encomiums upon works and in the preaching of the Law retain this rule: that **the Law is not observed without Christ**. As He Himself has said: *Without Me ye can do nothing*. Likewise that: *Without faith it is impossible to please God*, Heb. 11, 6. For it is very certain that the doctrine of the Law is not intended to remove the Gospel, and to remove Christ as Propitiator. And let **the Pharisees, our adversaries, be cursed, who so interpret the Law as to ascribe the glory**

**of Christ to works**, namely, that they are a propitiation, that they merit the remission of sins. It follows, therefore, that works are always thus praised, namely, that **they are pleasing on account of faith, as works do not please without Christ as Propitiator** (Ap IV III 148)

### Pharisees Sent back to the Law

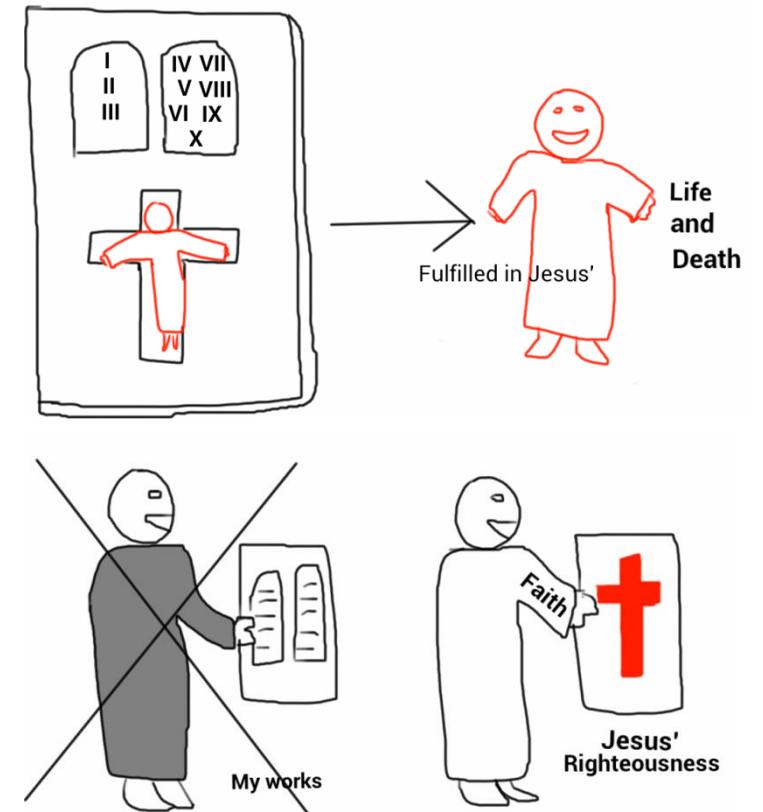
“And **human wisdom gazes at the Law, and seeks in it justification**. Accordingly, also the scholastic doctors, great and talented men, proclaim this as the highest work of the Law, and ascribe to this work justification. But deceived by human wisdom, **they did not look upon the uncovered, but upon the veiled face of Moses**, just as the Pharisees, philosophers, Mahometans. 109] But we preach the foolishness of the Gospel, in which **another righteousness** is revealed namely, that for the sake of Christ, as Propitiator, we are accounted righteous, when we believe that for Christ’s sake God has been reconciled to us.” Ap IV III 108-109).

“7. As to the revelation of sin, **because the veil of Moses hangs before the eyes of all men** as long as they hear the bare preaching of the Law, and nothing concerning Christ, and therefore **do not learn from the Law to perceive their sins aright**, but either become **presumptuous hypocrites [who swell with the opinion of their own righteousness] as the Pharisees**, or despair like Judas, Christ takes the Law into His hands, and explains it spiritually, **Matt. 5, 21ff** ; Rom. 7, 14. And thus the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all sinners [Rom. 1, 18], how great it is; by this means they are directed [sent back] to the Law, and then first learn from it to **know aright their sins**—a knowledge which Moses never could have forced out of them” (FC SD V 8).

“...but it is their own fault, as **they have heard the Word in such a manner as not to learn**, but only to despise, blaspheme, and disgrace it, and have resisted the Holy Ghost, who through the Word wished to work in them, **as was the case at the time of Christ with the Pharisees and their adherents**” (FC Ep XI 78).

“[When there were such, I say,] These did not need repentance. For of what would they repent, since they had not indulged wicked thoughts? What would they confess [concerning words not uttered], since they had avoided words? For what should they render satisfaction, since they were so guiltless of any deed that they could even sell their superfluous righteousness to other poor sinners? Such saints were also **the Pharisees and scribes in the time of Christ**” (SA III III 29).

## Catechesis On St. Matthew 5:17-26



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# The Third Commandment

## **The Sabbath Day Observance for the Jews alone**

“In the Old Testament God set apart the seventh day and appointed it for rest and he commanded it to be kept holy above all other days. **As far as outward observance is concerned, the commandment was given to the Jews alone.** They were to abstain from hard work and to rest, so that both man and beast might be refreshed and not be exhausted by constant labor” (LC 80).

“**Therefore, according to its literal, outward sense, this commandment does not concern us Christians.** It is an entirely external matter, like the other ordinances of the Old Testament connected with particular customs, persons, times, and places, from all of which we are now set free through Christ” (LC 82).

## **The Jewish Misuse**

“In time, however, the Jews interpreted this commandment too narrowly and grossly misused it. They slandered Christ and would not permit him to do what they themselves were in the habit of doing on that day, as we read in the Gospel—as if the commandment could be fulfilled by refraining from manual labor of any kind. **This was not its intention, but, as we shall hear, it meant that we should sanctify the holy day or day of rest**” (LC 81).

## **The Christian Interpretation**

“To offer ordinary people a Christian interpretation of what God requires in this commandment, we point out that we keep holy days not for the sake of intelligent and well informed Christians, for these have no need of them. We keep them, first, **for the sake of bodily need.** Nature teaches and demands that the common people — man-servants and maid-servants who have attended to their work and trades the whole week long — should retire for a day to rest and be refreshed.<sup>84</sup> Secondly and most especially, we keep holy days so that people may have time and opportunity, which otherwise would not be available, **to participate in public worship, that is, that they may assemble to hear and discuss God’s Word and then praise God with song and prayer**” (LC 83-84).

## Christ Explains the Law Spiritually

182] Now this commandment is easy enough, and has been often treated, because we hear it annually in the Gospel of St. Matthew, 5, 21ff, where Christ Himself explains and sums it up, namely, that **we must not kill, neither with hand, heart, mouth, signs, gestures, help, nor counsel.**

Therefore it is here forbidden to every one to be angry, except those (as we said) who are in the place of God, that is, parents and the government. For it is proper for God and for every one who is in a divine estate to be angry, to reprove and punish, namely, on account of those very persons who transgress this and the other commandments.

183] But **the cause and need of this commandment is that God well knows that the world is evil, and that this life has much unhappiness;** therefore He has placed this and the other commandments between the good and the evil. Now, as there are many assaults upon all commandments, so it happens also in this commandment that **we must live among many people who do us harm, so that we have cause to be hostile to them.**

184] As when your neighbor sees that you have a better house and home [a larger family and more fertile fields], greater possessions and fortune from God than he, he is sulky, envies you, and speaks no good of you.

Thus by the devil’s incitement you will get many enemies who cannot bear to see you have any good, either bodily or spiritual. When we see such people, our hearts, in turn, would rage and bleed and take vengeance. Then there arise cursing and blows, from which follow finally misery and murder. Here, now, **God like a kind father steps in ahead of us, interposes and wishes to have the quarrel settled, that no misfortune come of it, nor one destroy another.** And briefly, He would hereby protect, set free, and keep in peace every one against the crime and violence of every one else; and would have this commandment placed as a wall, fortress, and refuge about our neighbor, that we do him no hurt nor harm in his body.

186] Thus this commandment aims at this, that no one offend his neighbor on account of any evil deed, even though he have fully deserved it. For where murder is forbidden, all cause also is forbidden whence murder may originate. For many a one, although he does not kill, yet curses and utters a wish, which would stop a person from running far if it were to strike him in the neck [makes imprecations, which if fulfilled with respect to any one, he would not live long]. 187] Now, since this inheres in every one by nature and it is a common practice that no one is willing to suffer at the hands of another, **God wishes to remove the root and source by which the heart is embittered against our neighbor,** and to accustom us ever to keep in view this commandment, always to contemplate ourselves in it as in a mirror, to regard the will of God, and with hearty confidence and invocation of His name to commit to Him the wrong which we suffer. **Thus we shall suffer our enemies to rage and be angry, doing what they can, and we learn to calm our wrath, and to have a patient, gentle heart, especially toward those who give us cause to be angry, that is, our enemies.**